



4000-01-U

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

34 CFR Part 396

[Docket ID ED-2015-OSERS-0022]

Proposed Waiver and Extension of the Project Period;
National Interpreter Education Center for the Training of
Interpreters for Individuals Who Are Deaf and Hard of
Hearing and Individuals Who Are Deaf-Blind

[Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:
84.160B]

AGENCY: Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA),
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services,
Department of Education.

ACTION: Proposed waiver and extension of the project
period.

SUMMARY: The Secretary proposes to waive the requirements
that generally prohibit project periods exceeding five
years and extensions of project periods involving the
obligation of additional Federal funds for a 60-month
project initially funded in fiscal year (FY) 2010. The
Secretary also proposes to extend the project period for
one year. The proposed waiver and extension would enable

the currently funded National Interpreter Education Center to receive funding through September 30, 2016.

DATES: We must receive your comments on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: Submit your comments through the Federal eRulemaking Portal or via postal mail, commercial delivery, or hand delivery. We will not accept comments submitted by fax or by email or those submitted after the comment period. To ensure that we do not receive duplicate copies, please submit your comments only once. In addition, please include the Docket ID at the top of your comments.

- Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to www.regulations.gov to submit your comments electronically. Information on using Regulations.gov, including instructions for accessing agency documents, submitting comments, and viewing the docket, is available on the site under "Are you new to the site?"

- Postal Mail, Commercial Delivery, or Hand Delivery: If you mail or deliver your comments about this proposed waiver and extension of the project period, address them to Kristen Rhinehart-Fernandez, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW., room 5027, Potomac Center Plaza (PCP), Washington, DC 20202-2800.

Privacy Note: The Department's policy is to make all comments received from members of the public available for public viewing in their entirety on the Federal eRulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov. Therefore, commenters should be careful to include in their comments only information that they wish to make publicly available.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kristen Rhinehart-Fernandez. Telephone: (202) 245-6103 or by email: Kristen.rhinehart@ed.gov.

If you use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) or a text telephone (TTY), call the Federal Relay Service (FRS), toll-free, at 1-800-877-8339.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Invitation to Comment: We invite you to submit comments about this proposed waiver and extension of the project period. During and after the comment period, you may inspect all public comments about this proposed waiver and extension of the project period by accessing Regulations.gov. You may also inspect all public comments about this proposal in room 5027, Potomac Center Plaza, 550 12th Street, SW., Washington, DC, between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Washington, DC time, Monday through Friday of each week except Federal holidays.

Assistance to Individuals with Disabilities in Reviewing the Rulemaking Record: On request we will supply an appropriate accommodation or auxiliary aid to an individual with a disability who needs assistance to review the comments or other documents in the public rulemaking record for this proposed waiver and extension of the project period. If you want to schedule an appointment for this type of accommodation or auxiliary aid, please contact the person listed under FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT.

Background

On May 17, 2010, the Department published a notice inviting applications for new awards for FY 2010 (75 FR 27539) for a National Interpreter Education Center (National Center) to be funded under the Rehabilitation Training Program, authorized under section 302 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Rehabilitation Act). The purpose of the National Center is to assist Regional Interpreter Education Centers (Regional Centers) to train a sufficient number of qualified interpreters to meet the communications needs of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and individuals who are deaf-blind. The Department awarded a grant to one National Center in FY

2010 for a period of 60 months. This project is scheduled to end on September 30, 2015.

We have determined that it would not be in the public interest to run a competition under this program in FY 2015 for a new National Center. RSA has funded interpreter training programs since 1964 to meet the needs of its vocational rehabilitation (VR) consumers who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind. At each critical juncture RSA has re-evaluated its interpreter training program to determine how to best meet the evolving needs of consumers of interpreting services. In the course of this ongoing re-evaluation, we have concluded that, since 2005, when the current priority was established for the National Center, the training needs of interpreters have changed as a result of new and emerging issues facing VR consumers who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind.

Conducting a competition before the Department has had an opportunity to engage in strategic planning activities for the current program could result in (1) an ineffective or poorly targeted investment that would not meet the training needs of qualified interpreters and (2) the inability to sufficiently meet the communication needs of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and individuals

who are deaf-blind. We intend to use the remainder of FY 2015 and part of FY 2016 to consider how a National Center can best support the work of the Regional Centers; influence the field of interpreter education; and ultimately meet the current and future needs of VR consumers who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind so that they can obtain competitive integrated employment. We also plan to engage consumers, consumer organizations, community resources, service providers (especially VR agencies), VR State coordinators for the deaf, rehabilitation counselors for the deaf, and other appropriate individuals and entities about their ongoing and projected needs for a National Center, as well as gather examples of how they might utilize a National Center in the future. These activities will inform new funding priorities planned in FY 2016 for this program.

We have also concluded that it would be contrary to the public interest to have a lapse in the provision of the training currently provided by the National Center. Allowing funding to lapse before a new interpreter education delivery system can be implemented would leave individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and individuals

who are deaf-blind without necessary supports in the event that critical needs arise.

For these reasons, the Secretary proposes to waive the requirements in 34 CFR 75.250, which prohibit project periods exceeding five years, and the requirements in 34 CFR 75.261(c)(2), which limit the extension of a project period if the extension involves the obligation of additional Federal funds, and to issue a continuation award to the current National Center. Under this proposal, the current grantee with a project period ending on September 30, 2015, would receive funding to operate for an additional 12 months. Consequently, the expiration date for this grant would be September 30, 2016. With this proposed waiver and extension of the project period, the National Center will be required to develop a plan to demonstrate how it will continue to carry out activities during the year of the continuation award consistent with the scope, goals, and objectives of the grantee's application as approved in the 2010 competition. Such a plan should be submitted to RSA for review and approval by September 1, 2015.

If the proposed waiver and extension of the project period are announced in a final notice in the Federal

Register, the requirements applicable to continuation awards for this competition set forth in the 2010 notice inviting applications and the requirements in 34 CFR 75.253 would apply to any continuation award sought by the current grantee. If we announce the waiver and extension as final, we will base our decision regarding a continuation award on the program narrative, budget, budget narrative, and program performance reports submitted by the current grantee, and the requirements in 34 CFR 75.253.

Regulatory Flexibility Act Certification

The Secretary certifies that this proposed waiver and extension of the project period would not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. The only entities that would be affected are the current grantee receiving Federal funds to serve as the National Center and any other potential applicants.

The Secretary certifies that the proposed waiver and extension would not have a significant economic impact on these entities because the extension of an existing project imposes minimal compliance costs, and the activities required to support the additional year of funding would not impose additional regulatory burdens or require unnecessary Federal supervision.

Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995

This notice of proposed waiver and extension of the project period does not contain any information collection requirements.

Intergovernmental Review: This program is subject to the requirements of Executive Order 12372 and the regulations in 34 CFR part 79. One of the objectives of the Executive order is to foster an intergovernmental partnership and a strengthened federalism. The Executive order relies on processes developed by State and local governments for coordination and review of proposed Federal financial assistance. This document provides early notification of our specific plans and actions for this program.

Accessible Format: Individuals with disabilities can obtain this document in an accessible format (e.g., braille, large print, audiotape, or compact disc) on request to the contact person listed under FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT.

Electronic Access to This Document: The official version of this document is the document published in the Federal Register. Free Internet access to the official edition of the Federal Register and the Code of Federal Regulations is available via the Federal Digital System at: www.gpo.gov/fdsys. At this site you can view this document, as well as all other documents of this Department published in the Federal Register, in text or Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). To use PDF you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available free at the site.

You may also access documents of the Department published in the Federal Register by using the article search feature at: www.federalregister.gov. Specifically, through the advanced search feature at this site, you can limit your search to documents published by the Department.

Dated: April 13, 2015.

Sue Swenson,
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Special Education and
Rehabilitative Services.

[FR Doc. 2015-08909 Filed: 4/16/2015 08:45 am; Publication Date: 4/17/2015]